

NOTES ON TRADESCANTIA III

TRADESCANTIA OHIENSIS RAFINESQUE VAR. PALUDOSA (ANDERSON & WOODSON)
MACROBERTS, COMB. NOV.

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Anderson & Woodson (1935) described a new species from the vicinity of New Orleans, Louisiana, as Tradescantia paludosa Anderson & Woodson. This species has not met with general acceptance. Thieret (1970) placed it in synonymy with T. ohiensis. Correll & Johnston (1970) did not include it in the Texas flora although it had reportedly been collected by Hubricht in Freestone Co., Texas some time before 1967. (Sinclair, 1967).

Anderson & Woodson commented on the resemblance of the species to T. ohiensis: "Planta habitu T. canaliculatum Rafinesque simulans At first glance the only character which distinguishes this species from T. canaliculata may appear to be its somewhat lower and more diffuse habit." However, their collection of T. ohiensis from Louisiana, where it is the most common species, was far too exiguous, consisting of only two specimens, for them to draw such conclusions.

Although Anderson & Woodson collected eight specimens of T. paludosa from the vicinity of New Orleans their description does not adequately cover the deviations of this taxon from T. ohiensis. T. paludosa grows in dense stands in roadside ditches north of Baton Rouge and is sometimes cultivated in the old homes near St. Francisville. It is about as tall as T. ohiensis but with dark green (not "dilute viridibus" as Anderson & Woodson have it) foliage. The plant is either sub-glaucus or not glaucous at all. There is a slight tendency to root at the lowest node although this characteristic has not been observed on plants in northern Louisiana. The leaves, unlike those of T. ohiensis which are long, arcuate, and which leave the stem at an acute angle, are relatively short, straight, and leave the stem at nearly a right angle. The slight constriction emphasized by Anderson & Woodson is scarcely perceptible. A more pronounced idiosyncrasy of T. paludosa is its tendency to throw out dense, sterile, foliaceous shoots from the upper nodes and the frequent suppression of the uppermost node making the inflorescences appear tri-bracteate. The plants are essentially glabrous throughout except for the typical T. ohiensis bracteate sepal and bract tips.

In the course of a study of the Louisiana Tradescantias I examined all the specimens of that genus in the five major herbaria

of the state as well as those in our own collection. There were 228 specimens of T. ohiensis and 16 attributed to T. paludosa. It was apparent that many of the T. ohiensis specimens showed some or all of the T. paludosa diagnostics: leaf-shape, axillary growth and suppression of the upper node. Whether the plants were glaucous or not could not be determined from herbarium specimens but some were noted as "slightly glaucous," "sub-glaucous," etc.

Although the T. paludosa characteristics were concentrated in the plants around Baton Rouge and south along the Mississippi River, they were also found in specimens throughout Louisiana - in half the parishes - and into central Mississippi, Arkansas and east Texas. Intergradation was of all degree, diminishing as one moved from the center in southeast Louisiana.

Considering the reputation of Tradescantia for ubiquitous hybridization, the obvious explanation is that these intermediate plants represent crosses between T. paludosa and T. ohiensis. However, the more I study Tradescantia the less am I inclined toward characterizing the aberrant specimen as a hybrid. In this case, T. paludosa apparently fails to hybridize with the other common species, T. hirsutiflora Bush since little or no sign of T. paludosa characteristics could be found in specimens of that taxon.

Anderson (1954) suggested that T. paludosa might have arisen from a cross between some tropical creeping species and T. ohiensis. This is an intriguing suggestion and the extreme form of the taxon, as exemplified by a specimen in LSU (Baton Rouge) Bougere 2119, St. Tammany Parish, 1952, does remind one strongly, in leaf shape and growth characteristics, of some of the erect, not creeping, Mexican species.

T. paludosa is a diploid form of T. ohiensis centered in southeastern Louisiana. It appears to deserve more than simple synonymy with T. ohiensis yet the diffusion of its characteristics throughout the T. ohiensis population throughout the state militates against granting it specific status. It appears best to retain the entity as a variety of T. ohiensis with the obligate observation that, like most other matters connected with this genus, it needs further study.

Tradescantia ohiensis Rafinesque, var. paludosa (Anderson & Woodson) MacRoberts, comb. nov. Based on Tradescantia paludosa Anderson & Woodson, Contr. Arn. Arb. 9:1-132, 1935.

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